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APPENDICES

Biography of Kate Chopin

Kate Chopin (real name: Catherine O'Flaherty) is an American writer born to parents with different backgrounds. Her father, Thomas, is Irish, while her mother, Eliza O'Flaherty is a Creole woman—in this case, Eliza comes from a white race from France who was born and lives in the United States.

Chopin was born in 1850 in St. Louis, one of the largest cities in Missouri, United States. At the age of five, Catherine was sent to boarding school, but her father's death two months later caused Catherine to return home. In the nineteenth century, households and communities were greatly influenced by the patriarchal system. The Irish influences she had from her father gradually weakened since Catherine was raised by her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother from the age of five. Hence, Catherine's personality was shaped under the authority of Creole women, where most of the population spoke French rather than English.

Catherine's education was under the supervision of her great-grandmother, Victoire Charleville. She demanded Catherine the education of a middle-class French woman, which includes French and music lessons. Catherine mastered all of that very well. When she was seven, she enrolled in a Catholic school. She studied not only general subjects like literature and science but also subjects considered necessary for a young Creole woman such as sewing.

The outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, which was caused by the expansion of slavery to Louisiana, became the cause of Catherine's grief and anger at that time. The war that divided America into two parties—Union (United States/north) and Confederate (Confederate States of America/south)—lasted for four years (1861-1865). When she was thirteen, Catherine tore up the Union flag and refused to return it. This action was allegedly the beginning of Catherine's impetuous attitude that indicates her desire for freedom, especially for women who at that time could not resist the authority of the Union army. Catherine's memoir during the American Civil War is illustrated in some of her short stories, many of which focus on the lives of women during the war.

After graduating from Sacred Heart Academy, Catherine met Oscar Chopin at a social event held in Oakland, a wealthy estate near St. Louis. Oscar Chopin is a man from Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, whose French father had brought his family to Europe during the Civil War. Kate is described as a beautiful and intelligent figure. She also has a character that is different from the attitude of women in general who are required to be quiet and calm. In 1870, Oscar married Kate and expressed his sincerity that he loved her because of her intelligence. He was also willing to give her more freedom than a wife at that time could get. They raised their family in New Orleans, and Kate spent most of her marriage pregnant, much like Adele Ratignolle in *The Awakening*.

From 1871-1879, Kate and Oscar had five sons and one daughter. In 1879, the Chopin family moved to Clouterville, Louisiana. They moved because economic conditions did not allow them to continue living in New Orleans. Oscar and Kate opened a shop and started a simpler life. There, Kate was considered 'impolite' according to small-town standards. She lifted her skirt high enough to show her ankles. Kate also wears a fancy dress from New Orleans and smokes cigars. In 1882, Oscar Chopin died, leaving Kate a widow with six children, the eldest of whom had not yet reached the age of eleven. Kate at that time had no income and had to struggle to pay the debts of her late husband. Luckily, Kate had paid off her husband's debts within two years and was able to support and raise her children without help—a very unusual accomplishment for a woman in the late nineteenth century.

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Metzger, S. (2001). *CliffsComplete Chopin's The Awakening*. New York: Hungry Minds, Inc.

Synopsis of 'The Awakening' by Kate Chopin

The story of *The Awakening* is set in 1899. The Pontelliers are enjoying summer vacation on Grand Isle, a resort located on an island off the coast of Louisiana, about fifty miles south of New Orleans. The place is quite popular among wealthy residents who live in New Orleans.

The Pontelliers consist of Leonce Pontellier, Edna Pontellier, and their two sons. They stay at Madame Lebrun's cottage, which is also occupied by Creoles from the French Quarter. Leonce is described as someone who prioritizes his work over spending time with his family, so Edna is free to spend most of her time with a young man named Robert Lebrun and Adele Ratignolle, a married Creole woman of feminine grace and charm.

Through her friendship with Adele, Edna learned a lot about freedom of expression. Ratignolle's openness frees Edna from her forced 'obedient' behavior, it also gives freedom to her emotions that she has always kept to herself. Edna's journey in expressing herself becomes the main focus of this novel. The process of finding her identity is supported by her meeting with Robert Lebrun. Robert is described as a young man who is charming and likes to flirt with women—mostly married ones. This time, he devotes himself to Edna, and the two spend most of their days together.

At first, the relationship between Edna and Robert is limited to just friends. However, over time, a sense of love begins to grow between them. Edna feels more 'alive' than before that she starts releasing her artistic desire in painting. She

becomes aware of her sexual desires. However, Leonce is dissatisfied with Edna's negligence as a mother. Their children are self-sufficient and never come to her for comfort. At that time, femininity among the Creoles was closely related to motherhood. They must put the needs of their children before their own. Unlike Adele Ratignolle who is very motherly, Edna's attitude does not fit the stereotype, which makes Leonce—who is of Creole descent—irritated.

One evening, Edna overhears the conversation about Robert's sudden plan to go to Mexico. Edna is very surprised and devastated because Robert does not tell her about his plan although they have spent most of their time together. Robert then meets her to say goodbye, and Edna realizes that she is infatuated with him. On the other hand, Robert realizes that the relationship between him and Edna is a mistake, thus Robert decides to leave Grand Isle.

When she returns to New Orleans, Edna begins to neglect all her responsibilities as a mother and wife, preferring to spend her time exploring her hobby of painting. Leonce notices a change in Edna's attitude which he considers 'peculiar', so he seeks help from Doctor Mandelet. From the results of his examination, Doctor Mandelet suspects that Edna's change in attitude is caused by an extramarital affair. However, he hides his prejudice from Léonce. Doctor Mandelet, on the other hand, suggests that Léonce has to leave his wife alone because if he keeps Edna from doing what she wants, it will only exacerbate her rebellion.

Leonce eventually agrees to the suggestion and lets Edna remain home alone with their children while he is away on business. With the freedom given to

her, Edna decides to move into her own house and declares that she belongs to no one. As a result, Edna's sexual desires become worse. She has an affair with Alcee Arobin, a young man with a bad reputation who is able to satisfy Edna's sexual needs. Contrary to Robert, Alcee has no respect, as he is a man who behaves dishonorably, especially towards a woman.

The presence of Mademoiselle Reisz, a pianist who fully devotes her life to art, inspires Edna to continue the awakening of her freedom. Mademoiselle Reisz is the only person who is aware of the secret love between Robert and Edna, and she encourages Edna to confess and act on her feelings.

Unable to stay away for too long, Robert decides to return to New Orleans and confess his feelings for Edna. However, after declaring his love, Robert warns Edna that they cannot be together because Edna is another man's wife. Edna finally explains her freedom, rejects her husband's rights over her, and convinces Robert that the two of them can live happily together. However, Robert is a man of honor despite his love for Edna, so Robert doesn't want to be drawn into the affair.

When Edna hears that Adele is about to give birth, Edna leaves Robert and begs Robert to wait for her to return. After spending time together, Adele warns Edna about her children and suggests that Edna return to her old socially acceptable lifestyle. Edna reaches the peak of her depression when she realizes that she cannot achieve her freedom. When Edna returned to her house, Robert has gone and left a farewell note. The reality drags Edna into a deep depression after being confronted with a self-inflicted reality.

Edna finally returns to the Grand Isle. There, Edna walked straight towards the water. As the water drowns her body, Edna remembers her husband and children, Robert, the advice of Doctors Mandeleit, and her friends.

Source:

Chopin, K. (2008). *The Awakening and Selected Short Stories by Kate Chopin*. The Pennsylvania State University: Electronic Classics Series Publication.